Special pass for Haj pilgrims disapproved by Saudi Arabia

1050. SHRI B.S. GNANADESIKAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether special pass for Haj pilgrims has been disallowed by Saudi Arabia making possession of normal passports mandatory for those pilgrims;

(b) if so, whether Government has requested the Government of Saudi Arabia not to implement the decision of not allowing special pass within such short time;

(c) if so, the reply of Government of Saudi Arabia in this regard;

(d) whether Government also proposes to provide passports immediately as special case to the Haj pilgrims who scheduled for the current year; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has informed all the countries, including India, that from the year 2009 Haj pilgrims should travel with international passports. The Government of India has approached the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and sought exemption for Indian pilgrims from this new procedure and allow them to travel with "pilgrim passes".

(d) and (e) Passport Offices will facilitate issuance of passports to Haj pilgrims by opening special counters during the Haj season. In addition, the Government has issued instructions of all Passport Offices to ensure availability of passport booklets to meet the additional demand during the Haj season.

However, the Government intends to approach to Saudi Authorities for a reconsideration of our request and allow the existing system to continue for one more year.

Outsourcing of passport work

1051. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry has taken/plan to take a decision to outsource the processing work of passport to the private companies;

(b) if so, whether any company has been identified for the purpose;

(c) whether there are number of vacancies in different passport offices remains unfilled;

(d) if so, the details thereto, office-wise and category-wise;

(e) whether Government would consider filling up of these vacancies; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) The Government had entrusted the National Institute of Smart

Government (NISG), Hyderabad with the task of undertaking a time-bound study on the passport issuance system, including its IT aspects with the objective to deliver passport related services to the citizens in a timely, transparent, more accessible, reliable manner and in a comfortable environment, through streamlined procedures and committed, trained and motivated workforce. To achieve this objective, the NISG recommended setting up of Passport Seva Kendras all over the country where the non-sovereign functions, involved in the passport issuance process, such as initial scrutiny of the application forms, acceptance of fee, scanning of the documents, taking photos, etc. will be performed by the service provider selected as a result of an open bidding process. The sensitive activities, such as verification of documents, decision on grant of passports will be performed by the Government staff. Police verification will be expedited through electronic linkage of the Passport Seva Kendras with the police authorities in Districts/State Capitals. The service levels to be achieved include issue of passports within 3 days and in cases, which require prior police verification, within 3 days after the completion of the verification process. The Government accepted the NISG report and the Cabinet approval for the Passport Seva Project was obtained in September, 2007.

After following open bidding process as per the laid down procedure, M/s Tata Consultancy Service Limited (TCS) was selected as the Service Provider. The Master Services Agreement between the Ministry of External Affairs and M/s TCS was signed on October 13, 2008.

(c) to (f) The Government had approved 197 posts in Group "A" and "B" and 219 posts of Group "C" in the Central Passport Organization (CPO) for the implementation of the Passport Seva Project. The Government is taking steps to fill up the existing vacancies at the Passport Offices by promotion and through Staff Selection Commission. An indent for 193 Lower Division Clerks has been submitted to the Staff Selection Commission in January, 2009. The list of vacancies notified to Staff Selection Commission of Lower Division Clerks in the various Passport offices is given in the Statement (*See* below). The posts at the higher levels in the Passport offices have been filled up by promotions at different levels in January, 2009. It is expected that regular staff from the Staff Selection Commission will be in position during the year.

Statement

Details for Posts of Clerk sent to SSC

Allocation of Lower Division Clerks in different Passport offices

Sl. No.	Passport office	Indent placed with Staff Selection Commission
1	2	3
1.	Ahmedabad	20
2.	Amritsar	9

1	2	3
3.	Bangalore	12
4.	Bhopal	2
5.	Bhubaneswar	5
6.	Chennai	7
7.	Coimbatore	10
8.	Dehradun	2
9.	Guwahati	16
10.	Jaipur	6
11.	Kolkata	13
12.	Madurai	5
13.	Malappuram	13
14.	Mumbai	10
15.	Nagpur	7
16.	Panaji	3
17.	Patna	4
18.	Pune	17
19.	Raipur	7
20.	Ranchi	5
21.	Shimla	7
22.	Surat	10
23.	Visakhapatnam	3
	TOTAL	193

Killing of Tamils by Sri Lankan army

1052. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the approach of Government in the matter of Sri Lankan Tamils is indifferent, ineffective, discriminatory and wanting particularly, when the innocent Sri Lankan Tamils in thousands have been killed indiscriminately by Sri Lankan Army;

(b) whether it is not the responsibility of Government to protect the interest of Indians (Tamilians) in foreign soil instead of evading and avoiding by attributing some sundry reasons and excuses;